



OpenDoors NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY EDITION



YEARS OF GRACE

Open Doors Southern Africa

50 years of service to the persecuted Church

May / June 2021

We praise God for this milestone! p. 2 • Lessons from the persecuted Church, p. 4 • Letter from Brother Andrew, p. 5-6 • Mozambique: Then and now, p. 7 • Confessions of a persecuted Christian, p. 8-9 • 2021: Keep an eye out, p. 11



Representative image used.

We praise God for this milestone!

This year, Open Doors Southern Africa is celebrating 50 years of God's grace. The work in South Africa all started in 1971 after a few visits from Open Doors founder, Brother Andrew. In May of that year, Brother Andrew again came to South Africa on a short visit. A small group, invited by Brother Francis Grim, gathered in the Grim's home in Kempton Park to discuss establishing an Open Doors base in the country. On 10 May, Open Doors Southern Africa was established.

Today, the work of Open Doors has extended into other parts of Southern Africa. Together with the prayers and support of thousands of Christians, millions of persecuted Christians in closed countries have been strengthened to stand for Christ, no matter the cost.

Thanks to God's grace and your partnership, over the past 50 years, Open Doors Southern Africa has strengthened approximately 5,3 million Christians in more than 60 countries!

We, at Open Doors Southern Africa, are humbled by the privilege of serving our persecuted family alongside you. We give God all the glory, honour and praise for His amazing grace all these years. And we thank you, our partners, for your unwavering commitment to stand with our persecuted family so that the kingdom of God can advance in some of the darkest places on earth.

Memorable moments in our ministry

1971

OPEN DOORS SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Southern Africa base is founded to inform, encourage and equip the Church here to care for persecuted brothers and sisters worldwide.

1981

PROJECT PEARL

One million Bibles were delivered to a beach in China in just one night. Thousands of waiting believers gather to receive them.

1982

SEVEN-YEAR PRAYER CAMPAIGN

Open Doors launches a seven-year campaign of prayer for the Communist Bloc. Seven years later, in 1989, the Berlin Wall falls. The Soviet Union is opened to the Gospel and Christian prisoners are released.

1991

TEN YEARS FOR THE 10-40

A ten-year prayer campaign begins for the 10-40 window – the area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia which includes the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

1992

WORLD WATCH LIST LAUNCHED

The first annual World Watch List is published – a unique

and invaluable resource showing the 50 countries where Christians suffer the most severe persecution for their faith.

1998

OPERATION DAILY BREAD

Open Doors launches its first relief project. Over 400 tons of food and medicine are delivered to starving believers in war-torn South Sudan.

2010

RIGHT TO BELIEVE

The Right to Believe campaign sees over 428 000 Christians around the world sign a petition showing their support for persecuted Christians.

2013

SAVE SYRIA

In response to the civil war in Syria, Open Doors launches its largest relief programme ever, helping Christians in the country to stay and shine.

2017

800 000 SIGNATURES

Over 800 000 supporters from 143 countries sign the global "Hope for the Middle East" petition, which is presented to the UN.

2018

IMPACT INDIA

Open Doors launches a five-year campaign in support of the Christians in India facing heightened persecution under growing Hindu extremism.



THREE LESSONS FROM THE PERSECUTED CHURCH



Representative image used.

1 Prayer is like harvesting frankincense

A Christian in the Arabian Peninsula shared how a small shallow cut is made in the bark of the frankincense tree. Each cut produces a small amount of sap that is left for a few days to harden into a resin. Once it has hardened, the resin is collected and temporarily stored to continue drying until it finally turns into beautiful frankincense.

Like harvesting frankincense, we must be patient when it comes to praying, as Christ's character grows in us and our brothers and sisters. Although we don't always see the fruit of our prayers, the prayers of the saints do rise, reaching heaven, and the Lord answers all prayers in His own way and His own time.

2 The peace of God is bigger than the fear of persecution

A persecuted Christian from Egypt shared how she and her family were being persecuted by a man, who threatened to kill her father. She and her family closed their shop for 20 days, praying and crying

at home. She was very afraid but then something happened...

"Slowly I started to feel an unimaginable peace. It was bigger than I could understand, I hadn't felt it before, and I didn't understand. But I felt peaceful, and not afraid anymore. My father taught me how to forgive our persecutor and how to look at him through the eyes of God. We pray for him all the time. Our fight isn't over yet, but we know God is with us."

3 Church is not a building

A Christian from India shared how, after he had preached at a friend's church, his friend took him to another church in a restaurant. The church didn't have money to sustain their building because the former congregation had become so involved with their material well-being. They sold the building to a businessman, who turned it into a restaurant.

He learnt that *"a church isn't a building. God isn't interested in how beautiful our buildings are. Satan is. His strategy is to make us very programme-orientated, so that there are always problems to solve. God, however, is interested in the condition of the human being."*

It's all in the family by Brother Andrew

Any right-thinking person always asks for the “why?” In our case, why is there so much persecution? Where did it start? Could we have prevented it? Can we intervene, stem it or at least help the victims of the vicious attacks?

Doesn't the Bible teach us clearly that we should help all people, but especially those who belong to the family of believers (Galatians 6:10)? I like this expression: “*Family of believers*.” It indicates that we are all one family, the family of God. What a privilege! But also, what a responsibility!

The Bible says a great deal about the family ties that we have with our fellow believers in Jesus Christ. The clearest teaching in the whole Scripture is undoubtedly the teaching about the Body of Christ, which refers to the inseparable unity of all who belong to Him, who have become a living part of Jesus' Body.

If we were to realise this fully, ethnic divisions and church partitions would collapse. And an endless stream of visitors, relief goods, Bibles and prayers would go out to persecuted believers as part of the Body.

Yes, we would “*have equal concern for each other*”. Yes, we would feel their suffering and pain as if it was our own (1 Cor. 12:25-26). And I am convinced that we, at Open Doors, and many similar organisations, would no longer have to ask for the support to help everyone who needs it. There would be more than enough.

(Continued on page 6)

“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

Galatians 6:10



Is this all?

(Continued from page 5)

But another step must be taken, a huge step forward. Jesus took this step for us. In Acts 9 we read about the first organised persecution of Christians: Saul on the way to Damascus to arrest the believers. Suddenly, Jesus appears to him and says: *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"* (Acts 9:4).

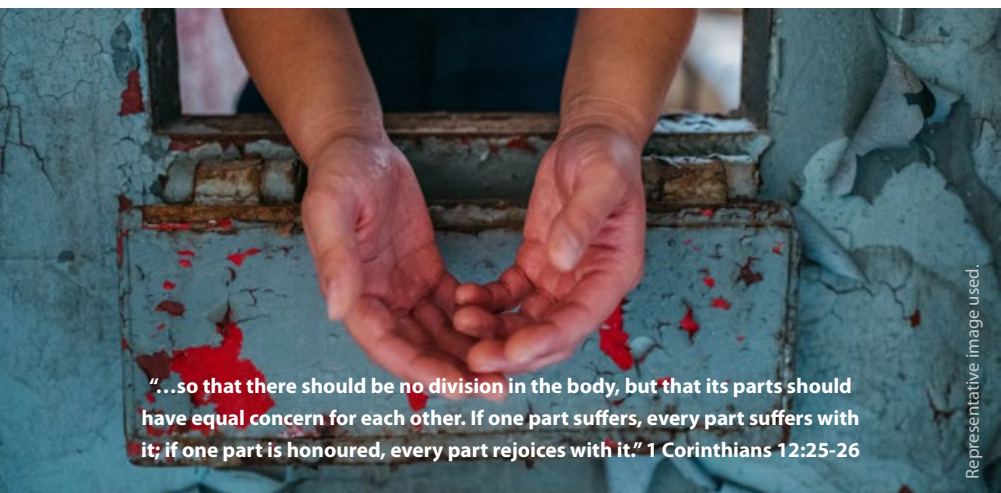
This is nothing short of a revelation! Saul is not persecuting the Church, dissident Jews or religious fanatics. No, he is persecuting the life of Jesus in men and women.

The unity among Christians and the divine Subject of their faith is so complete that, for God, any attack on a believer is equal to an attack on His Son. In other words, Jesus identifies with His persecuted followers. The many stories we have published over the years illustrate the incredibly close presence of Jesus with those who suffer for His name. It almost changes persecution into sweet persecution.

It is perfectly clear that Jesus, the Son of God who lives in me, is the real object of persecution. Perhaps here it is good to make the distinction between persecution and opposition because it is simply not true that we are all persecuted. (See also Hebrews 10:32-34.) But everyone who claims that he is following Jesus in this wicked world and knows nothing of opposition, should take a careful look at his or her life. Light and darkness conflict; good and evil have nothing in common.

What is really important for us as Christians is simple, and the solution can be applied to every conflict without requiring us to specialise in political science or comparative religion. We should support the Body of Christ worldwide, as if it was ourselves, particularly in these last days with persecution increasing. It is my prayer that our faith, love, intercession and support will increase correspondingly.

First featured: June 2001 ODSA magazine.





Thanks to God's grace and your partnership, over the past 50 years, Open Doors Southern Africa has strengthened approximately 5,3 million Christians in more than 60 countries!



Thank you for standing with our family in Mozambique

Mozambique – a country rich in natural resources and beauty, and a popular holiday destination for many South Africans. It has been long considered to be a post-conflict success story. Sadly, today political, economic, religious and social triggers have left Mozambique exposed to acts of violence carried out by Islamic extremist groups.

In Cabo Delgado, the most neglected part of Mozambique, civilians have been engulfed by attacks by these groups since 2017, with Christians facing the brunt of these attacks.

Furaia* (in her 40s) is one of the believers whose life has been deeply affected by the attacks in Cabo Delgado. Last year terrorists attacked her village and brutally murdered her husband and brother as she watched from her hiding place in the tall grass.

"I saw them tie up my husband's hands and torture him, shouting: 'Allahu Akubar! Allahu



Akubar!' before they cut his throat. I saw them kill my brother and some other men in the same way."

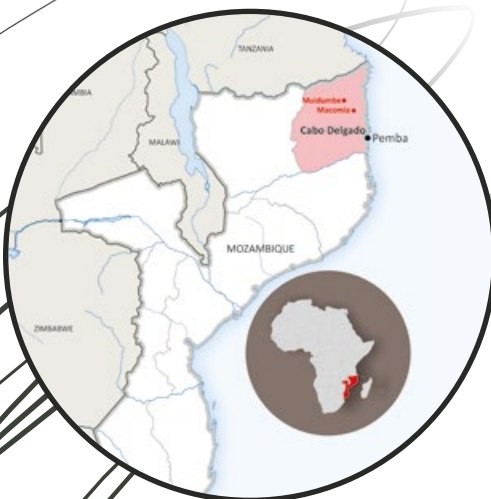
She had no time to mourn or bury her husband and brother. As soon as the terrorists left, she gathered her brother's children and her own and fled.

She had lost everything and had nowhere to go, with 14 children to take care of. Thankfully, it was at this time that Open Doors relief aid reached her, thanks to you.

"I thank God for the help that arrived. My children and I now have something to eat. Without this help we would have starved. To the donors, I would like to say thank you and God bless you," says Furaia.

Please continue to pray for our family in Christ like Furaia, who have been traumatised by the ongoing attacks in Mozambique. Pray that God will be their rock and shield at this time.

**Name changed for security reasons.*



CONFESSIONS OF A PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN

by Rev Michael Dissanayeke

This is an excerpt from our September 1997 newsletter:

Today we remember thousands of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world who are persecuted for their faith in Christ. Paul wrote to the Philippian Church from this same situation, as he was being persecuted and imprisoned for his faith. The Philippian experience from the outset was one of persecution. With this background it was easy for Paul to relate to them, and help them identify with his situation as he said:

"Since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have" (Philippians 1:30).

The persecuted Church has always inspired the rest of the Body to mobilise forces and unite themselves in evangelism with greater resolve. Although some had to pay the supreme sacrifice and were not delivered from their situations, their heroic courage and endurance have challenged many into ministry and even martyrdom.

Persecution cannot stop the Church from fulfilling the Great Commission but rather makes it determined in its resolve: To preach the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. When Jesus spoke of persecution, He said:

"When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another: I tell you the truth, you will not

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23).

The message of the Gospel must be carried on. Let us remember that the most persecuted areas in the world are the ripest for the harvest, and although they are restricted, the Church shows great promise. We must not be dismayed by the strength of the oppressors, as it does not mean that the Church is weak. From the persecution of Rome in the early centuries to the Communist regimes in recent history, the Church has survived and reigned to prove that to be true.

The Church worldwide must stand in solidarity with the determination of the suffering Church, to agree with them that the oppressed is not the victim, but the victor!

Let's join together in prayer and faith, knowing that closed doors are by no means a closed heaven. As Jesus challenged Nathaniel, let's believe in an open heaven.

Representative image used.



“Persecution cannot stop the Church from fulfilling the Great Commission but rather makes it determined in its resolve: To preach the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.”

2021

KEEP AN EYE OUT

Join us in the second half of the year as we continue to support, lift in prayer and speak out for our persecuted family in Christ.

Here is what you can expect in the coming months:

India

JULY/AUGUST

In just one year, Open Doors was able to double its impact in supporting, praying for and speaking out for persecuted Christians in India. Now we want to triple that impact. On India's Independence Day on 15 August, we'll be joining Christians around the world in solidarity with Christians in India through a mass supporter initiative – be a part of it!

International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

NOVEMBER

Persecuted Christians' number one request is for prayer. Every year, Christians around the world take part in the International Day of Prayer for them.

Hope for the Middle East


SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

War and unrest have destroyed Iraq and Syria and uprooted many from their homelands. All of this has diminished the Christian presence in the region. Those Christians that remain, need hope to rebuild the Christian presence in the country.

Christmas campaign

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

Christmas is a time of heightened persecution for Christians in closed countries. Many have to celebrate in secret due to the dangers they face. Our Christmas campaign seeks to give them hope and remind them that they're not alone.



Visit www.opendoors.org.za and keep an eye out for our communications about these upcoming projects.

Dear partner of the persecuted Church

"I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord, the deeds for which He is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us – yes, the many good things He has done for Israel, according to His compassion and many kindnesses."

Isaiah 63:7

Looking back on the 50 years that Open Doors Southern Africa has been in existence, we can say confidently that this verse is indeed true in our history!

On 10 May 1971, a handful of South African church leaders met with Brother Andrew (founder of Open Doors International and author of *God's Smuggler*) and formed Open Doors Southern Africa. Their promise to Brother Andrew was that they'll spread the message of the persecuted Church in Southern Africa, and that they'll support his work with prayers and finances.

It started small with one full-time staff member and only a few partners supporting the work. Today there are thousands of partners in Southern Africa

involved with the most persecuted through prayers and support.

In the 30 years that I've had the privilege to be part of this organisation, I met many persecuted brothers and sisters who testified how our involvement is changing their lives and reassures them that they're not alone. I've now run my race and will soon pass on the baton.

As I close this chapter of my life, I thank the Lord for how He has used Open Doors to change the lives of millions of persecuted Christians. And I thank you, our partners, sincerely for your love, prayers and support over these years. Your involvement is changing lives!

ALL GLORY TO GOD!

Together in His service



Jan Gouws
Executive Director
Open Doors Southern Africa



Open Doors South Africa


P.O. Box 1771, Cresta, 2118

T +27 11 888 9341

F +27 11 888 9362

E southafrica@od.org

I www.opendoors.org.za

 064 867 4730

Bank Accounts: South Africa, **Geopende Deure - Open Doors NPC, ABSA - Northcliff (632005), Acc. no. 160340568**
Geopende Deure - Open Doors, Nedbank Business Account (198765), Acc. no. 113 750 4552

Bank Account: Namibia, **Geopende Deure - Open Doors NPC, Nedbank - Windhoek (461609), Acc. no. 1-2000-23847-1**
(Please fax proof of payment to: +27 11 888 9362)

All information compiled by Open Doors Southern Africa and correct at time of printing. No reproduction without permission.

Contact Milandr  at [milandre @od.org](mailto:milandreh@od.org)

REG # 2004/023397/08 | Printing done by Resolution Litho